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TO THE

# Electors of the State of Pennsylvania.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS,

APPOINTED by the convention that met at Harrisburg, on the 4th of March last, for the purpose of nominating a Candidate for the office of Governor, a committee of correspondence to promote the election of William Findlay, the object of their choice: we solicit your serious attention to a few important facts, and to inferences naturally arising from them. In the performance of this duty we shall studiously abstain from the use of intemperate or indecorous language. We scorn to appeal to your passions. Our address shall be to your reason and to your understanding.

Three important points appear to embrace the chief considerations connected with the question, who is to be the governor of this great state for the ensuing three years? which question you will be called upon to decide on the second Tuesday in October—These are, the claims, the merits, and the fitness of the candidates—the mode in which the nominations were made—and the support of which the parties respectively rely.

There are but two candidates for the office of governor—William Findlay and Joseph Belester—the former, as we have stated, nominated by the convention at Harrisburg—and the latter by a meeting at Carlisle. We proceed cursorily to review the merits of each.

William Findlay was for a series of years a member of the legislature of this state. In this capacity his conduct and his voice merited and received the decided approbation of his constituents. From that honourable and useful station he was by the legislature appointed treasurer of the state. This high confidential office he has filled with great reputation for ten years. The tenure is annual. And he has been uniformly re-elected by the votes of the democratic members of the legislature, and simultaneously, until last year, when, for the first time, a rival candidate was started against him merely on the ground that he was then regarded as fit only to be a candidate for the office of governor. This opponent, though of very respectable standing, and unimpeached character, received but six out of the whole number of democratic votes in the joint meeting of both houses of the legislature, notwithstanding the most indefatigable exertions of those who have been chiefly instrumental in the late nomination of Mr. Belester, and the most ardent efforts to prevent the re-election of Mr. Findlay.

We hope you will duly weigh these plain, simple facts. We trust we do not overrate their importance. To us they appear decisive as to the standing, claims, and fitness of the candidate whom we offer to your consideration, and for whom we solicit your support. He has, we see, been tried for a series of years in a situation next in importance to that of governor—a situation in which he has necessarily become familiar with those departments of state, which are peculiarly under the care and control of the executive. He has passed the ordeal of public scrutiny, pure and unstained. Never, till he was contemplated as the candidate for governor, did the foul tongue of calumny dare make an attempt to tarnish his character. And, under the goading excitements of jealousy what is the grand allegation against him? merely the exercise of that urbanity, and those hospitalities, the neglect of which would have been just subject of censure. In default of any real offence, this has been tortured into an attempt to secure votes by appeals to the appetites of the electors. We are ashamed to notice such an insignificant accusation. We cannot help regarding it as discreditable to the cause which it is intended to support. We have too much reliance on your intelligence and judgment to feel from it the least shadow of apprehension.

With respect to Mr. Heister's claims, we are unable to perceive them. He has been long in public life. But his career has had so little to distinguish it, that we cannot very easily trace his proceedings. And we hope to prove that in the few cases in which he appears to have taken a decided part, he has been radically wrong—his conduct has been in direct hostility with the principles of the democratic party.

Among the facts which establish this position unequivocally, we must notice his anti-republican vote in the convention that framed the constitution of this state. He there manifested a culpable desire to abridge the right of suffrage in a most essential particular. The constitution, as it now stands, entitles the sons of all persons qualified to vote at elections, to exercise this important right between the age of twenty-one and twenty-two years, whether they have paid taxes or not. An aristocratic attempt was made to confine this right to the sons of *freeholders*, by which a large number of our most useful and estimable citizens would be disfranchised at a very interesting period of their existence. This inroad upon the all-important right of suffrage commanded the support and vote of Mr. Heister.

The fact is so strong and unequivocal in its character, that it cannot be too deeply weighed. It is decisive of the question of the republicanism of Mr. Heister. Some of his friends have denied it with great confidence—regardless of its being duly recorded in the minutes of the convention. We annex an extract from those minutes, and solemnly pledge ourselves for its authenticity.

*Extract from the Minutes of the Convention of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, part II. page 94*

*Saturday, Feb 13, 1790.*

The following section being under consideration—

“In elections by the citizens, every free man, of the age of twenty-one years having resided in the state two years next before the days of the elections respectively, and without at time paid a state or county tax, which shall have been assessed upon him at least six months before the election, shall enjoy the rights of an elector.”—Which was determined in the affirmative.

A motion was made by Mr. Sitgreaves, and seconded by Mr. Mawhorter, to add the following proviso to the said section as amended, viz:—

“Provided that the sons of *persons* qualified as aforesaid, between the age of twenty-one and twenty-two years, shall be entitled to vote, although they shall not have paid taxes.”

It was then moved by Mr. Ogden, and seconded by Mr. Hand, to amend the said proviso, by striking out the word *persons*—and in lieu thereof, to insert the word “*freeholders*.”

And on the question “Will the Convention agree to the same?” the yeas and nays being called, by Mr. Ogden, were as follows, viz.

YEAS.

Hilary Baker,	Baltzer Gehr,
Samuel Ogden,	John Arndt,
Thomas Jenks,	Peter Rhoads.
John Barclay,	John Hoge,
William Gibbons,	David Redick,
JOSEPH HEISTER,	Jonathan Shoemaker 12

There were 46 Nays

The question on the proviso itself, was carried by 32 affirmative votes to 30 negative ones, among the latter, JOSEPH HEISTER.

Every citizen who approves of circumscribing the elective franchise—who would attach peculiar privileges to freeholders—who would wish to elevate one portion of our citizens at the expense of the others—ought, for sake of consistency, to support Mr. Heister, for this aristocratic vote. But all those who are in favour of an equality of rights—who are against according distinctive privileges to a few—ought to carry to the election-ground, in October, their condemnation of this anti-republican procedure of Mr. Heister.

We turn our eyes from this trait of conduct to the compensation law, on which it has been attempted to establish a high degree of character for Mr. Heister. It was confidently asserted that he had not only opposed the passage of that law, but had nobly and disinterestedly refused to receive any more than the usual Congress wages, six dollars per day. This report gained him great credit and numerous friends. It was regarded as a favourable augury of the qualities of the future governor. But unfortunately for Mr. Heister those pretensions were canvassed—the proper records were investigated—and it was found that these encomiums were wholly destitute of foundation. Mr. Heister did not vote on the passage of

the compensation law. He was absent from the house. It is not for us to say whether he declined voting, for the purpose of screening himself from the responsibility of sanctioning a bill which he foresaw would be obnoxious—or whether his non-appearance was accidental. Suffice it to say, he was not in the house, and that all the applause bestowed on him for his strenuous and patriotic opposition, “ vanishes like the baseless fabric of a vision ”

But independently of the encomiums bestowed on him for his imaginary opposition to the compensation law, his friends, as we have stated, have been loud in his praise, for his refusal to accept more than the six dollars per day. And it was universally believed that he had received exactly that sum, and no more, from the treasury. Here again we discover, that when “ weighed in the balance, he is found wanting,” as much as in the former instance. The protest which, by this noble procedure, he was said to have entered against the selfish conduct of his colleagues, had no existence but in the imaginations of his friends. The facts of the case are simple. We submit them for your consideration.

At the close of the session of 1815-16, Mr. Heister, in common with the other members of congress, received the full amount of his compensation of \$ 1500 per annum. He had no scruples of conscience on the subject. The money went to enlarge his enormous wealth. The session of 1816-17 closed in the same manner, with full payment to Mr. Heister. He had no more scruples than before. But on the 4th of March, he was unexpectedly recommended as a candidate for governor at Carlisle; and then for the first time did he feel any uneasiness at partaking of the obnoxious compensation. He was probably impelled by his friends to perform some popular act whereby to ingratiate himself with the public. Accordingly, he presented the surplus beyond six dollars per day, amounting to thirteen hundred and sixty-four dollars, to the treasurers of the counties of Berks and Schuylkill. And this donation, which comes in so very “ questionable a shape,” was delayed until so late as the 29th of March. The time in which the measure was adopted, demands as much consideration as the measure itself.

It is hardly possible to hesitate what opinion to form on this procedure. It has a most sinister aspect. If Mr. Heister believed the compensation law unjust—if he believed that members of congress were not entitled to more than six dollars per day—if his disinterested spirit spurned at the idea of receiving the extra pay, why draw it from the treasury of the United States? Why contaminate himself with any part of the 1364 dollars? or if he believed it to be an act of duty, with the money of the United States to relieve the landholders of Berks and Schuylkill from a portion of their taxes, why not

have paid the surplus to the treasurers immediately on his return home? why wait for the illumination arising from his nomination as candidate for the chair of governor? Had he adopted either of these alternatives, there might have been less grounds for censure.

We leave it to the freemen of the state of Pennsylvania to form a correct estimate of this unprecedented trait of conduct.

If it display public spirit, patriotism or liberality, let them reward it with their free suffrages, and elevate Mr. H. to the station to which he casts his eyes. But if it bear on its forehead the unequivocal marks of a sinister policy—of an awkward and tardy attempt to influence them unduly, we trust they will stamp it with their most marked disapprobation on the day of the ensuing election—and bar the door to the high office of governor against the man who has formed so erroneous an estimate of them as to suppose them capable of being misled by a procedure which a child could see through.

In the discussion of the fitness of the respective candidates, various other important considerations arise, which demand attention. Mr. Findlay is about forty-eight years of age. He has had long experience in the routine of public business, and that business intimately connected with the first executive magistrate. Should he be chosen at the ensuing election, and re-elected twice, which is as often as the constitutional limitation allows, he will still, at the expiration of his last period of service, be far younger than the rival candidate is at present. Mr. Heister has long passed the meridian of life. He is far advanced in its wane. He is, we are very credibly informed, not far from seventy years of age. Suppose, however, that he is but sixty-five. This, most assuredly, is not a period of life calculated to encounter the duties of governor. In fact, had he filled that station for half his life, his advanced age would loudly call for a respite and exemption from its cares and its burdens in future. But it is really preposterous, in a state containing probably one million of inhabitants, as if we had not a single suitable citizen in the prime of life, to select one bending under the weight of years, and at a period when the mind partakes of the decay suffered by the body, for a station which requires a considerable degree of energy; and let it be observed, that had Mr. Heister's mental powers, when at the meridian of life, been of the highest grade, which no man will dare aver, he would be a singular instance of extraordinary good fortune, if they had not by this time experienced a great depreciation.

It is of importance, in forming a correct decision on the subject of the two candidates, to ascertain who are their supporters respectively. Mr. Findlay will have the votes of the great mass of the democratic party—of those electors whose

votes aided to elevate Mr. Monroe to the presideney, who placed the present governor in the chair—and to whom the democratic members of the existing legislature owe their seats. On the other hand, Mr. Heister will have the support of a small portion of the democrats, those who, in conjunction with the federalists, voted for an electoral ticket intended to exclude from the presideney, the respectable citizen who has been elevated to that high station by so overwhelming a majority of the votes of the citizens of the union. He will, moreover, have the support of the federalists generally, who, for the purpose of dividing and destroying the democratic party, have formed this coalition, with those men with whom, at no very remote period, they carried on the most envenomed hostility. Ponder well on this subjeet. It demands your most serious and sober reflection. Ask yourselves this plain question, will you become parties to this alliance, the consequence of which if it be successful, must be to reduce your party to insignificance? Will you imprudently destroy, in a period of peace, the ascendancy which you preserved through all the perils and horrors of war? will you impair the political standing of the state in the union? We too well know your public spirit and patriotism to entertain any doubts on the subject.

There is not an intelligent man in the state who can persuade himself that Mr. Heister has any chance of success, but by the powerful aid of the federalists. To them if he be governor, he will indubitably owe his elevation. And he must be devoid of every spark of gratitude, if he does not make a suitable return for the favor conferred on him by this party. It behoves you deeply to weigh whether you are disposed to support a candidate whose chief reliance is placed on your political opponents, or him who, if successful, will be elected by a pure democratic vote—and whose proceedings will harmonize with those of the general government.

This is a fertile topic. It admits of copious details. But we are spared those details. The subject was exhausted in 1804, by Mr. Heister himself. In that year he put on record the most unequivocal testimony against his present conduct. He addressed to his constituents, the citizens of Berks county, a long circular letter, containing the following declarations which anathematize and seal the condemnation of the course he and his friends are now steering. By his own pen he stands condemned: Here are his sentiments—

“ Above all friends and fellow citizens, adhere to true republicanism—and do not suffer yourselves to be deceived either by federalists, or those who call themselves republicans, and yet at heart are federalists. An union with federalists, in the least degree, I cannot approve.” Mr. Heister continues: “ When republicans make a common cause with federalists, though **IT SHOULD BE FOR THE**

“**BEST OBJECTS**, the republican cause must suffer.”—Thus in 1804 he clearly reprobated “making common cause with the federalists” even “for the best objects.” And now, by a most wonderful inconsistenceny, he and his friends “make common cause with them,” to seure the office of Governor for himself, and the patronage of the office for his friends.

There is another strong and most decisive objection to Mr. Heister. In the year 1805, he made himself the instrument of giving general circulation to a most atrocious calumny against the whole of the democratic party. This was nothing less than that they were ripe for and determined on a division of property—an agrarian law. This unworthy and unfounded allegation was among the causes of the defeat of the democratic candidate for Governor at that period.

Let us now examine the mode of nomination, which has been the ostensible ground of dissatisfaction with those members of the democratic party who have seceded, and who act in unity with the federalists. Their chief objection lies against a “*caucus*” nomination. We request your attention while we examine the system heretofore prevalent, and that which was adopted at Harrisburg last March.

The constitutions of the several states, as well as of the United States, have made no provision for the nomination of candidates for public offices. On this important operation, which is in general, in its results very nearly equivalent to an election, they are wholly silent. This is a defect much to be regretted—a defect which the citizens have to supply at the approach of an election, in the best manner they can devise.—Different modes have been adopted for the purpose at different times and in different places.

The nominations, by both parties, of candidates for the presidency of the United States, have been uniformly made by meetings of members of Congress; and those of candidates for governors of the states, generally, if not universally, by meetings of members of the state legislatures. The objections to this system, radical and strong as they are, did not for a series of years attract general attention. It was acquiesced in cheerfully by the citizens throughout the union. The prevalence of party spirit extended the acquiescence to a much longer period than would otherwise have taken place. This appeared to be the plan best calculated to secure the unanimity of the parties respectively. Each of them was apprehensive of losing its candidate, if it departed from the received system of nomination, more particularly when their respective numbers were nearly equally balanced.

At length, however, the conviction became very general, that legislative nominations were radically unsound, and that a different mode of nomination was requisite: And accordingly the college of electors, chosen by the citizens of this

state for the important purpose of electing a president of the United States, and who met last December, after having performed the functions for which they were specially delegated, took up the consideration of the approaching election for governor. And after a full and free deliberation on the reasons for and against the various plans that had been either practised or suggested, they recommended a momentous change in the operation; that the democratic citizens of the various districts in the state should assemble at their usual places of election—and elect delegates to meet at Harrisburg, on the 4th of the then ensuing March, to nominate a candidate for governor.

Let it be observed—and the observation deserves peculiar attention that there was no other body of men then assembled, or likely soon to assemble, to whom the citizens of the state of Pennsylvania could more naturally look up for such a recommendation—and none, of course, so suitable to take cognizance of the affair. This, no doubt, had its due share of influence in the acquiescence that took place.

That this was an important and radical improvement will not admit of a doubt. And it reflects a high degree of credit on the good sense of the state that this sound recommendation, which made a total and salutary change in a vital operation of our elections, was at once adopted and acted upon throughout the state. It was worthy of, and honorable to, the respectable body by whom it was proposed, and worthy of the state which thus so readily carried it into effect.

Meetings were accordingly held in every county of the state, except two. Delegates were appointed to meet at Harrisburg. Some of the counties delegated the power of acting for them, to their senators and representatives in the state legislature. This they had an indubitable right to do—But the greater part elected delegates for this especial purpose. Of the former description, there were, on the final vote, forty-four members—and of the latter, sixty-nine, besides some, who were not early enough acquainted with the fact of their election—and one or two who, though in Harrisburg, were absent when the vote was taken.

It may be asserted with perfect safety that a more respectable body of men never assembled in the state of Pennsylvania. Their proceedings were conducted with a most exemplary degree of dignity, decorum, and propriety. They sat in an unsected their business with open doors. They courted and defied scrutiny. Every man who chose, had free admittance to the gallery. When the final vote was taken, the numbers were,

For Mr. Findlay, 99  
Mr. Boileau, 44

The members who had voted for Mr. Boileau, came unequivocally forward—declared their determination, as became good citizens, to submit to the voice of the majority—and pledged themselves to support, by every fair and honorable means, the candidate selected by that majority.

We have thus given a candid statement of the origin and proceedings of the Harrisburg convention. We feel a pride and pleasure in the retrospect—and we trust that among the great mass of the liberal and enlightened democratic citizens of the state, they will meet with an unanimous and decided approbation.

But, say the friends of Mr. Heister, the meeting at Harrisburg was “a caucus”—and therefore the citizens of the state ought to reprobate their proceedings and reject the candidate they have submitted.

We ask—and we hope for an explicit reply—if the proceedings of the Harrisburg convention are to be rejected on the ground of its having been “a caucus,” on what ground can the advocates of Mr. Heister ask or expect an acquiescence in the proceedings of the meeting at Carlisle? This is a plain question—an answer to which is expected from the supporters of that gentleman.

It is rare to find a stronger contrast than existed between the two bodies, in their organization and in their proceedings.

The Harrisburg convention consisted, as we have stated, of 113 members, fairly chosen throughout the state, and the only complete representation of the state that has ever taken place for such a purpose. But the meeting at Carlisle was composed of only thirty-nine members, representing not a third part of the state, and several of these irregularly chosen. We have shewn the ingenuous mode in which the proceedings of the Harrisburg convention were conducted. The Carlisle meeting exhibited a most marked contrast. They sat with closed doors, with strong appearances of concealment and mystery. If ever there was a caucus, or conclave, that meeting was surely one.

Can there be a much higher grade of inconsistency than those citizens are guilty of, who, on the ground of “caucus,” raise such a clamour against the Harrisburg convention, consisting of 113 members, from every part of the state, and who were themselves members, or are advocates, of the Carlisle meeting, consisting of only thirty nine?

There are fifty counties and two cities in this state: and according to the statement published by the president and attested by the secretary of the Carlisle meeting, there were but thirteen counties and the city of Philadelphia represented in it. There was *not one member from any county west of the mountains*. The representatives were from the city of Phila-

delphia, counties of Philadelphia, Chester, Lancaster, Northampton, Berks, Schuylkill, Dauphin, and Lebanon, on this side of the Susquehanna; and from Cumberland, Franklin, Centre, Mifflin, and Lycoming, beyond it.

We could have gone into much more ample details—but we have sufficiently trespassed on your patience—and we shall close with a brief recapitulation.

1. Mr. Findlay has been nominated by a convention from every county in the state but two, and consisting of 113 members.

2. Mr. Findlay relies wholly on the votes of the democrats.

3. If Mr. Findlay succeeds it will unite the democratic party.

4. Mr. Findlay is supported universally by the friends and well-wishers of the administrators of the general and state governments.

5. Mr. Findlay's public career has not only been free from censure, but has had the highest testimony in its favor for eighteen successive years.

6. The proceedings of the Harrisburg convention were conducted in open day, without mystery or concealment.

1 Mr. Heister has been nominated by a meeting of from less than a third of the state, and consisting of thirty-nine members.

2 Mr. Heister's principal reliance is on the aid of the federalists.

3. If Mr. Heister succeeds, the seeds of lasting hostility and of the prostration of the party will be sown.

4. The supporters of Mr. Heister were decidedly opposed to the election of Mr. Monroe—They are, particularly the federal portion of them, still hostile to him.

5. Mr. Heister has been proved to have committed various political sins of deep dye; and even on points whereon his supporters have highly eulogized him, has pursued a sinister course. In proof of both allegations, we refer to his votes in the convention in 1790—his calumny of the democratic party on the subject of an agrarian law—and the compensation law.

6. The proceedings of the meeting at Carlisle, were conducted with closed doors, and in complete conclave.

7. Mr. Heister, as far as in him lay, laboured to defanchise all our young men, arrived at maturity, for one year, unless their fathers were *frēholders*. And lastly,

8. After having in 1804, denounced as political heresy all associations with the federalists, even “for the best objects,” he has now, through the medium of his friends, formed an alliance with them for his own personal aggrandizement.

Weigh well these things. Lay seriously to heart the high duty that devolves on you, and the important consequences that depend on it. Perform that duty faithfully to our common country—and may her good genius direct your votes for the promotion of her best interests

MATHEW CAREY, *Chairman.*  
 PAUL COX,  
 JACOB HOLGATE,  
 DANIEL H. MILLER,  
 DANIEL GROVES,  
 J. S. HUBER.

Attest,

PETER A. BROWNE, *Secretary.*

*Philadelphia, May 31, 1817.*

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